

THE
BIBLICAL REPERTORY.

JULY, 1834.

No. III.

REVIEW.

Archibald Alexander

ART. I.—*The Case of the Dissenters, in a Letter addressed to the Lord Chancellor.* Fifth edition, London.

AT present, no subject excites a deeper interest in Great Britain, than that of church-reform. The success which attended the late effort to promote a civil reform in the constitution of the empire, has not satisfied the friends of liberty and equal rights, but has rather stimulated and encouraged them, to render their work perfect, by extending the reform to the ecclesiastical establishment of the nation. It is a singular, and we believe, an anomalous fact, in the history of the world, that three different forms of Christianity should be established by law in the same empire; so that he who in England enjoys the privileges of a member of the established church, in Scotland is subjected to all the privations and inconveniences of a Dissenter; and, *vice versa*, the legitimate member of the Scotch establishment is a Dissenter as soon as he crosses the Tweed. But in Canada, Roman Catholics, who are barely tolerated in Great Britain, enjoy the patronage and favour of the Government.

we say, however, that Professor Tholuck regards these *dogmas* as untenable. And in the volume before us, no trace is found, on any page, of these or any similar theories, so that the object of our digression will have been accomplished, if the reader shall, with us, feel the necessity of a sober investigation of revealed truth, and an abhorrence of that falsely called philosophy which too often ends in turning the truth of God into a lie. To conclude, we do not hesitate to say, that (so far as our knowledge reaches) no work of equal value to the mere interpreter has ever appeared on the same subject.

ART. III.—*Bodily Affections produced by Religious Excitement.*

MR. EDITOR—The following letter, it will be perceived, was not originally intended for the press. Nevertheless, the brother to whom it was directed, is so much interested in its contents, and so convinced of its adaptedness to do good, that he cannot refrain from offering it for a place in your miscellany. He differs from the respected writer in one respect. He does not think that such facts as are detailed, ought to be consigned to “oblivion.” They are highly instructive, and ought to be recorded, and remembered for the benefit of the coming generation. He who gives such a simple and striking picture as is here exhibited, of the scenes in question, is a benefactor of the Church of God.

H. A.

Thomas Cleland

Dear Brother—I have, since your communications came to hand, been so much engaged, in one way or another, that I have had no leisure to attend to your request respecting the revivals of 1800–3. And even now, I feel too much at a loss, and unprepared to do any thing more than to state a few facts, and to give a brief sketch of what fell, mostly, under my own observation. I was not in the ministry at that time, but recollect distinctly, the scenes and passing events of the day. I do not write this for the press, but for your own eye, allowing you the privilege of making what use of it your superior judgment may dictate.

The revival of religion, under consideration, commenced in the southern and western sections of Kentucky, or what is generally known by the Green River country. The principal instruments were the Rev. Messrs. M'Gready, Hodge, Rankin, and M'Gee. The first named individual was in the van. He was a devout, evangelical, powerful preacher; a pupil of Dr. M'Millan, lately deceased. These men, let it be recollected, were the original leaders and abettors of the subsequent irregularities and disorders of the Cumberland Presbytery; which will be noticed hereafter. Previous to this revival of religion, Kentucky, and all this western region, was in a state of great coldness and declension. The country was new, and a heterogeneous mass from all quarters had pressed into it. Presbyterians, both clergy and people, were very formal. Sacramental services were very long, and often irksome, and apparently unedifying, or rather, uninteresting to the large mass of attendants. Communicants were heads of families generally; rarely was there to be seen a young person at the Lord's table. The services were conducted on the plan suggested in our Directory for Worship, Chap. 8. Sec. 6. The Sabbath was occupied, in preaching, *fencing*, and *servng* the tables, as it was called, from five to eight hours. The communion was held *twice* in the year, in those churches which had stated pastors or supplies, and in many churches only *once* in the year. Such was the state of things when the revival commenced, which was sometime in the year 1799, in the region before mentioned. The population there was sparse at that time, and widely scattered. The work at first, was no doubt, a glorious work of the Spirit of God. The calls for ministerial labour were so great and extensive, that it was impossible for the few clergymen, recently settled there, to supply the demand. This circumstance suggested the idea of *protracted* meetings; that the ministers might have the opportunity of meeting people at one time and one place. There were then no missionaries to go from place to place, and preach to the scattered population. And inasmuch as no neighbourhood had a population sufficient to support so many people as assembled on those occasions, this gave rise to the plan of *camp-meetings*. A grove was selected; "a pulpit of wood," or, as we generally term it, a *stand*, for the clergy was erected. The multitude who intended to be stationary, located themselves, with their wagons, carriages, or tents, in such places around the stand, as their fancy or convenience dictated. The assembly was often so great, that *secondary stands* were erected: the congregation divided, so that three or four preachers were discoursing at the same time, in different parts of the

grove. Here was the commencement of disorder and confusion. The sermon had scarcely commenced, when some one or more would become the subject of *bodily exercise*. This was commonly called the *falling exercise*; or, as it was often said, such and such an one was "*struck down*." I cannot better describe this exercise, than Dr. M'Millan has done, in his letter to President Carnahan. "It was no unusual thing to see a person so entirely deprived of bodily strength, that they would fall from their seats, or off their feet, and be as unable to help themselves as a new-born child. I have seen some lie in this condition for hours, who yet said that they could hear every thing that was spoken, and felt their minds more composed, and more capable of attending to divine things, than when their bodies were not thus affected. As far as I could observe, the bodily exercise never preceded, but always followed, upon the mind's being deeply impressed with a sense of some divine truth." Another *fac simile*, if I may so call it, you may find in Mr. Gulick's letter, written on the Island of KAUAI. See Miss. Herald, vol. 29. p. 404. "Some were seized with a kind of convulsive trembling; and in a few cases, overcome by their feelings, they fell prostrate on their faces, and lay for a length of time weeping in a most affecting manner. And what, in my estimation at least, renders this work the more remarkable is, that many of these very persons, who now felt so deeply, have, for years, been in the habit of hearing the most solemn and alarming truths in the Bible, without the least apparent emotion. But now, without any special cause of excitement or alarm from us, they are thus deeply affected." But now, as I conceive, commenced the principal mischievous measure. When any one would become the subject of this bodily exercise, immediately a group would collect around, and commence singing, and then praying, and then exhorting. Many instances of this kind obtained in different parts of the congregation all at the same time. Hence it happened, that, throughout the assembly, as far as the eye could reach from the stand, there was a continual commotion and confused noise of preaching, exhorting, singing, praying, and shouting going on at the same instant. Many from curiosity or anxiety, were seen continually running from one group to another; so that the multitude was in a perpetual state of commotion and agitation. This scene of things continued day and night, with little or no abatement. The ministry rather yielded up the reins to the multitude, who, being carried away with such a state of things, considered the pulpit of little account, if any at all. Indeed, preaching, especially of the *didactic* character, was considered a great *hinderance* to the pro-

gress of the revival. This sentiment was not confined exclusively to the populace, for some of the leading and most popular preachers gave way to the opinion, that such kind of preaching was rather an interruption to the *great work* that was then going on. Hence the most zealous, arrogant, and enthusiastic of the laity, finding the ministry ready to surrender their posts, very naturally took the whole management of the service out of their hands and controlled it at pleasure. Moreover, if a minister, however evangelical in faith and practice, did not come "*fully up to the mark,*" i. e. if he expressed any disapprobation, ministered any caution, attempted to correct any extravagancies, he was not only set down immediately as being hostile to the revival, but even interrupted and prevented from proceeding in his discourse, by some of the multitude, who commenced singing, or praying, or exhorting, or shouting, which ever was, at the time, found most convenient, by the leaders of such disorder. It was, ultimately, out of this hot-bed of wild enthusiasm and disorder, that there sprung up that fruitful crop of heresy and schism, that afterwards assumed the shape, as well as the name, of *New Lights, Schismatics, Marshallites, Unitarians, and Shakers.* By these heresies, the Synod of Kentucky was deprived of eight members, viz: Marshall and Thompson, (who afterwards recanted their errors and returned,) Stone, Dunlavy, M'Namer, Huston, Rankin and Bowman. All these, except Stone and Bowman, became *Shakers.* For a particular account and description of *bodily exercise*, as they were perpetuated and fostered among the *New Lights*, after they became a *separate* and *distinct* body, being excluded from our church, I refer you to the "*Evangelical Record,*" (p. 217.) written by M'Namer, while one of that party, or perhaps after he turned Shaker. The description is indeed ludicrous, but so far as my knowledge and observation extended, at the time, I cannot detect any thing incorrect in the statement. I do not consider it exaggerated, or too highly coloured. As to these extravagancies, the Presbyterian church by this time began to pause, and look on these scenes, as they were fully acted out by the *New Lights*, with a degree of wonder and disgust. Still there was enough, and more than enough, among ourselves, to make us blush, on a review, and excite in us a desire to hide our mother's nakedness if we could. The work was conducted by Bishop and M'Chord. I return to the revival scenes.

We have seen the origin of *camp-meetings*; which have so much importance now attached to them. They originated in the Presbyterian church from *necessity*; and this necessity, per-

haps, at the time, justified the measure. And so long as they were confined to the circumstances which seemed to call for them, were extensively accommodating and thought to be highly beneficial. The meetings, at first, were awfully solemn; and no doubt much good was done. But when they were extended, and adopted in the more populous parts of the country, where they were attended by thousands and tens of thousands, induced by every motive good or bad, together with the lax and irregular management of them, they exhibited too much the appearance of disorder and confusion which baffled and defied all description. It is proper to remark, however, that the form and arrangements of camp-meetings *now*, differ very much from those in former days. *Then*, the people came together without any shelter but their wagons and their tents, erected where convenience or fancy might dictate. They brought provisions for themselves and horses, and whatever else was thought necessary to their continuance on the ground for many days. *Now*, the plan of temporary buildings of small log huts, in regular order, around the stand, and the space where the congregation is to assemble, is adopted. Order and solemnity generally prevail, and are carefully inculcated and constantly maintained. Formerly, as we have seen, it was entirely the reverse. As for the comparative good or evil attending camp-meetings, I have nothing to say; as my acquaintance with such meetings is very limited. They appear to be lauded or condemned according to the opinions and prejudices of their advocates or opponents.

I confess myself much at a loss to know the proper shape and size of the subject now before me; how far the plan of this history should extend; what to set down, and what to omit. To descend to particulars, and minute circumstances would not be agreeable to the feelings of some yet living; nor do I know that it would be edifying. I will state a few facts and anecdotes, connected with the subject before us. I was licensed to preach in April 1803; both before and after which, I witnessed many things, the detail of which would make a little volume. The largest meeting I attended was in June 1801, at Caneridge, Bourbon county, where B. W. Stone was then pastor. The exercises, as well as the encampment, were such as I have described above. Many appeared to be deeply affected; and many had fallen down. There was much singing, praying, exhorting, &c. at tents, at the meeting-house, and every place where small groups were assembled around one or more of the persons who were "*struck down.*" Subsequently, during the years 1802—3, I witnessed many cases of bodily exercise, the most of which I

have reason to believe, were entirely involuntary; while some others, I thought were the reverse, i. e. either the persons conceited, or fancied themselves under exercise; or desired to be, and therefore sought for it, and yielded to the first impulse, which might, however, have been successfully resisted. Many persons within my knowledge, became hopefully pious, the most of whom continue unto the present, and many have fallen asleep in Jesus. The number of apostacies were much fewer than might be supposed. Indeed, when I look back on those times, I greatly wonder that there were not ten for one. The Presbyterian church suffered greatly, lost many members, more ministers, *proportionably*, than others: but, she continued unconsumed, and was much better prepared, by practical knowledge, and dear-bought experience, for the next revival than she was before. But to our narrative.

A contemporary brother minister, by my request, has given me in substance, the following facts. The first personal knowledge he had of any of the subjects of the revival was in the winter of 1800—1, near the borders of the state of Tennessee. Shortly after the people began to assemble, two or three persons appeared to swoon away, and after lying fifteen or twenty minutes, appeared to be wholly convulsed, some more than others. His attention was particularly called to a young female, who, after sometime lying apparently motionless, began to move her lips. On a near approach, he found himself the subject of her prayer; from which it appeared that she was under the impression, that he had come a considerable distance, and from a cold region, to see the *great work* that was going on in that place. And she prayed fervently that he might not be disappointed. When she recovered, resumed her usual posture, and state of mind, there was great solicitude manifested by her minister and others, to know the result of her exercise, what she had seen, &c. She informed them, that she had seen that they were to have a glorious meeting that day, and the minister (Mr. Rankin) said he had no doubt of it. In that same place, there were others who saw, during their exercises, as they expressed themselves, certain persons, (who were yet unconverted) in the act of preaching and a very great work going on under their ministry; and they appeared to expect it with as much certainty as if it had been revealed to them from heaven. At that time and place, there was a considerable mixture of wheat and chaff. On the one hand, there was manifestly, an anxious disposition to converse on religious subjects, and particularly about the experience and exercises of the heart; a close attention to the preaching of the

word, with apparent desire to profit thereby. There appeared among many a docile temper, a spirit of inquiry, with fervent prayer and cautious zeal. On the other hand, there was a prevailing sentiment, that the subjects of the revival had more than common attainments in evangelical knowledge and piety; that the millennium was just at hand, even at the door; of which fact these extraordinary exercises were certain precursors and evidences. These and such like extravagant notions, were, of course, attended by an arrogant boldness, and self-importance, which did not savour of the religion and spirit of Christ. Social meetings, catechetical instruction, &c. were almost, if not altogether neglected. As before intimated, the intervals between sermons, were occupied by the multitude in various exercises. The ministers took, comparatively, but little interest in conducting the worship, except in the time of preaching, which occupied but a small portion of the twenty-four hours. The rest of the time was spent as before described, singing with great fervor and animation, shaking hands all through the crowd, praying by fifties and hundreds all at the same moment. Such scenes I have often witnessed. Young converts were often seen passing through the assembly, and on the outskirts thereof, exhorting sinners, in a very lofty tone, and peremptory manner, to fly from the wrath to come. Others would pray for hours together, until they were exhausted; and when they could stand up no longer, they would sit down, or recline on some other person, and then pray, or exhort, until completely exhausted; so that nature could exert itself no further. These exercises were greatly applauded, and highly approved, as being not only certain evidences of the gracious state of the individuals themselves, but likewise, as eminently useful and instrumental in furthering the revival. When some of the elder brethren were inquired of about the expediency and propriety of correcting some extravagancies which appeared wild and visionary, their reply was, in substance, that they knew these things were not right; but should they interfere by attempting to rectify them at that time, it might interrupt, if not stop, the revival altogether. Here the ministry, however good the intention, was much at fault. The surrendering up the control and management of the religious exercises into the hands of mere novices, or such as were unskilful and inexperienced, was the very inlet or gateway, to those errors and extravagancies that soon followed. There was, if I mistake not, one general, prevailing, prominent feature attending this revival every where; it was the strange, mistaken disposition, in a very large portion of the people, to undervalue the public means of

religion, and in the place thereof, to promote a kind of tumultuous exercise, in which themselves could take an active part, if not become the principal leaders. Hence, some of these would-be-leaders have been known to lie down and sleep in the time of preaching, and during some of the most serious and solemn addresses, and as soon as the sermon was over, suddenly rise to their feet, and sing, and shake hands, and pray, and exhort, with all the apparent energy of a saint or messenger from heaven. The wild fanatical notions of some were manifested by their believing themselves under obligation to go, according to certain impressions, which they considered to be from heaven; namely, that they must go to certain places, and say and do certain things, and that it must be done and said at a certain time, &c. Many such things as these, which would be tedious and unnecessary to detail here, obtained and prevailed in this revival.

I proceed to relate a case or two, respecting the exercise called the *jerks*. This succeeded sometime after the *falling exercise*; and, I believe, had its origin in East Tennessee, at least it was, to use a commercial phrase, first *imported* into Kentucky from that quarter. It affected the good and the bad, the aged and the young. It was entirely involuntary, dreaded and hated, and even cursed by some; while it was desired, and courted, and highly prized by others. It came on something like the *hiccough*, without any premonitory symptom, and left the subject equally without any sensible effect. During its prevalence, I made several experiments; being a young minister, and inexperienced, I knew not what to do with it. While preaching, I have, after a smooth and gentle course of expression, suddenly changed my voice, and language, expressing something awful and alarming, and, instantly, some dozen or twenty persons, or more, would, simultaneously, be *jerked* forward, where they were sitting, with a suppressed noise, once or twice, somewhat like the barking of a dog. And so it would either continue or abate according to the tenor, or strain of my discourse. The strong sympathy, and intimate correspondence between the mind and body, was fully manifested, by this experiment, producing the exhibition which immediately followed. The first subject of this exercise that attracted my attention, was the pious wife of one of our elders. She was affected by this operation very gently, she felt no pain whatever, but rather the reverse—a pleasing sensation—could give no satisfactory account of its operation. She went to the country village, on a public day, to do a little shopping. I accompanied her on our way home. She was entirely free from any operation of the *jerks*. I determined in my own mind to try an experiment, con-

versed freely and somewhat jocularly with her on secular matters, to divert her mind as far off in that direction as I thought necessary; and then immediately changed the subject to that of a very serious and solemn character. I am certain, not two minutes had elapsed, before she was considerably effected with this exercise. Her body, from the saddle and upwards, appeared to pitch forward half way to the horse's neck, six or eight times in a minute. I was fully satisfied she could not prevent it. My mind became, sometime after, greatly perplexed about this exercise. I could not encourage it, and yet, being a young minister, I was afraid to say any thing against it, publicly, as it had many friends and advocates. At length it was found to be detrimental in various ways; besides interrupting public worship, it deterred many from attending altogether, being impressed with the belief that it was "*catching*." But it was not confined to the public assembly; it invaded the private and domestic circle, while engaged in domestic business, or travelling on the road. The same individual was frequently the subject of it, young and old, male and female, refined and unrefined, the pious and the wicked, were alike under its operation.

Take another singular case, stated to me by Mr. M'Gready. A young man, son of an elder, to avoid attending a camp-meeting in the neighbourhood with the family, feigned himself sick. On the morning of the Sabbath, he continued in bed, until the family had all started for the meeting; he being left alone, except a few small blacks. When thus alone, he congratulated himself on his success, by the deception he had practised on his parents. He raised up his head, and looking all around his room, smiled at the adventure; but lest it might not be complete, lest some one might have occasion to linger, or return, and so he be detected, he resumed his clinical position, covering over his head, and in a short time directed his thoughts towards the camp ground. He fancied the multitude assembling, the services commenced, the bodily exercises, as he had seen them, now in operation. He fancied a certain female now in full exercise; "now she's at it, now she's at it." In a moment he was taken with the same exercise, the *jerks*, was hurled out of his bed, and *jerked* hither and thither, all around the room, up against the wall, and in every fashion. He had never been affected by bodily exercise before, but now found himself perfectly unmanageable. He had heard it said, and indeed witnessed the fact, that *praying* would cause the *jerks* to cease. He tried it; the desired effect followed immediately. He felt no more the effects of the exercise than a person does after the hiccough. He supposed it all a dream, a mere conceit, illusion or something of the kind, resum-

ed his bed, commenced his pranks again, and again was the scene acted over, only a little worse. The same remedy was resorted to, and he again became *in statu quo*. He arose, dressed himself, sauntered about awhile, wanted some employment to pass the time away, bethought himself of a *dog skin* in the vat, that needed *unhairing*, he drew it out, laid it on the beam, rolled up his sleeves, grasped the graining knife, lifted it up to make the first scrape, when lo, it was instantaneously *flirted* out of his grasp, and he was *jerked* back, over logs, against the fence, up and down, until he resorted to his old remedy and again obtained relief. Feeling, as before, perfectly free from any sensible or evil effects, as strong and resolute, and determined, and reckless as ever, he ventured again. He assumed his instrument, and resumed his posture over the subject of his intended operation, when immediately, before he could make one stroke, the whole scene, only, if possible, tenfold worse, was acted over again; it was much more severe, and greatly protracted. The usual remedy, at first, failed; he became alarmed, thought the Lord was now about to kill him, became deeply convicted of his great folly and wickedness; became composed again in body, but now greatly agitated and concerned in mind; called a little black, pointed him to the dog skin, which he was afraid now to approach, directed where to lay it away, returned to his room weeping and crying to God for mercy, and in this condition was found on the return of the family. He shortly afterward obtained a good hope through grace, applied for the privileges of the church, gave this relation of facts to the session, was received, and in the judgment of Christian charity, gave satisfactory evidence by a scriptural experience, and godly living, that he was a renewed man, and redeemed sinner saved by grace.

I will trouble you with only one case more. One evening I rode six miles up Green river, and preached at a Mr. M'Whorter's, in a Baptist settlement. The house was crowded. The people were attentive, until I had finished my discourse and had prayed, and was about to sing the last hymn, but was forestalled by an enthusiastic kind of man, who started a song with a lively tune. Several young women began to *jerk* backwards and forwards. The seats were immediately removed, to afford room and prevent them from being hurt. One young woman had what I would call the *whirling exercise*. She went round like a top, I think at least fifty times in a minute, and continued, without intermission, for at least an hour. It exceeded by far, any thing of the kind I had ever witnessed. I was told she had had the *jerks* nearly three years. She did not appear exhausted;

complained of pain or distress if the bystanders did not continue singing. I became perfectly tired, my preaching seemed to be all gone, and to have been rather in the way, from what took place afterwards. I remonstrated with some of them, and cautioned them. Thus you see this exercise continued, more or less, in one or another place for a long time. It, however, in the general, gradually disappeared, especially from the Presbyterian church; and thus afforded us a very happy relief. I was heartily glad when it was entirely gone. After all these novelties left us, the church, like one enfeebled and exhausted, sunk down into formality and apathy. After she had passed through the fire, she came forth more refined as to doctrine, and soundness in the faith. For nearly twenty years afterwards was she without a revival. But blessed be God, she has recovered, and her borders have been greatly enlarged, and her stakes strengthened; and I trust in God, she will never see and feel such another shock. In her wisdom and experience, I believe such things will never find favour and encouragement again.

The Cumberland business was the last difficulty we had to struggle with. The "Brief History," &c. put out by the Synod of Kentucky, I perceive you have, or I would send you a copy. The facts there detailed I know to be true—I wrote the History as the servant of the Synod; had all the documents; was present at all the meetings which had any concern in that business. I would not have any thing altered except the style and some few typographical errors. The original Cumberland Presbytery was one of our own, formed by the Synod from Transylvania Presbytery, and shortly after dissolved, being incapable of transacting business. M'Gready and Hodge acknowledged and renounced their ecclesiastical aberrations; Rankin turned Shaker; M'Gee and M'Adam were under citation, but never appeared. The whole business was finished by the Assembly in 1809, and in February 1810, the present Cumberlands formed themselves into a separate body. By a subsequent Assembly (I do not recollect when) they have been recognized as other denominations, such as Methodists, Baptists, &c. Some of their ministers are more violent against us than the Methodists. Their preachers are generally illiterate, and a little more than semi-Arminian. They have carried off, by their zeal and name, many members of our church, where we had no ministry. A friend in whom I can confide, lately informed me, that they are very friendly in Missouri; co-operate with us heartily in the Christian enterprises of the day; boldly and successfully combat heresy; and appear to manifest great anxiety, and desire to become, in some way, united with us. But this cannot be,

from their present aspect as a body. Their literary character, as well as orthodox standard, is too low and uncertain. Should it become expedient to branch out, in extending the history of the revival, (as I wrote to you before) it will be necessary to trace, first, the *New lights*, the sphere of whose operations was, in the eastern section of Kentucky, by Marshall, Stone, &c. The Rev. W. L. McCalla collected materials for their history before he left Kentucky, but I know not what he did with them. Out of these heretics soon sprung the Shakers, whose history is familiar. The Cumberland is a distinct branch altogether, gradually rising and growing out of the disorders which obtained in the Green River country, or further down in Kentucky, and in West Tennessee, called Cumberland, I suppose, from the river of that name, running by Nashville. This accounts for the name "Cumberland Presbytery," at first given to that section of our Synod, and subsequently adopted by the present Cumberlands, as they are generally called. In their worship, they are considered more noisy and disorderly than the Methodists. In short, to use a homely phrase, they have Presbyterian *warp*, but Methodist *filling*.

My dear brother—With this hasty sketch, meager and unsatisfactory I fear it will be, I must stop. I do not know what more I can do. The whole subject, with all its bearings and relations, would require a little volume. And after all, were the whole written and published to the world, still the inquiry forces itself upon my mind, *cui bono?* Those singular transactions have so long passed away; the times so changed; the church gone so far ahead; Christian enterprise so active and extended; the era so new and wonderful; all things considered, would it not be as well to let those unhappy, mistaken steps and observations, pass on to oblivion as fast as possible? I yield, however, to your better judgment. Make what use you please of this rapid and hastily written sketch. I have no leisure to transcribe it. Look over its imperfections and blunders. For the general aspect, or substratum, of matters and things, as they existed among us at the time he wrote, I refer you to the second Epistle of Rev. David Rice, see *Memoirs*, by D. Bishop, p. 340. The notes, over the signature of *Anon.* were from the pen of Dr. J. P. Campbell. For details, I refer you to what I have here written, in connexion with the *Evangelical Record*, before mentioned.

For Cumberland Presbyterians, I refer you to the Brief History. It is a document containing facts that ought to be preserved, and more generally known. If any thing more should be needed, do not fail to let me know, and every demand

for the good of the cause, shall be faithfully and cheerfully complied with, as far as within my power.

THE JERKS.

As the facts, in relation to these bodily agitations are somewhat remarkable, we deem it expedient to make some addition to what is stated above, by our worthy correspondent.

The phenomenon of swooning, or suddenly falling or sinking down, under religious exercises, has not been uncommon in times of great excitement, and under very impassioned preaching. Such occurrences were very frequent under the ministry of Whitefield and Wesley; and in this country, during the great revival which took place under the preaching of Whitefield, the Tennents, Blairs, &c. such appearances were of frequent occurrence. The same was remarkably the fact at Cambuslang and Kilsyth in Scotland, during the extraordinary religious excitement which took place in those towns, early in the last century. We have also witnessed such effects on the body, as occurring very commonly, in the meetings of the Methodists and Baptists in the south and west. In the cases which have fallen under our observation, the effect on the body was entirely involuntary. Sometimes it was preceded by a universal trembling of the whole frame; but at other times, the falling was as sudden as if the person had been struck with lightning. In some cases, there followed a convulsive motion of the limbs; but most frequently the patient lay motionless, as if in a swoon. And the only remarkable difference between these paroxysms, and those of common syncope, is that, in the former, the person is not unconscious of what is said and done in his presence.

But the bodily agitation called the *jerks* is a very different affection; and the only appearance known to us, which bears a resemblance to it is the jumping exercise in Wales, of which Dr. Haygarth has given an account in his treatise "On the Effect of the Imagination in the cure of bodily diseases." The same facts are referred to in Sidney's Life of Rowland Hill. This extraordinary nervous agitation commenced, as stated by our correspondent, in East Tennessee, at a sacramental meeting; and we have been informed, that on that day several hundreds of persons, of all ages and sexes, were seized with this involuntary motion. It was at first almost uniformly confined to the arms, and the motion proceeded downwards from the elbow, causing

the arm to move with a sudden jerk, or quick convulsive motion, and these jerks succeeded each other, after short intervals. For some time no religious meeting was held, in which this novel involuntary exercise was not exhibited by more or less of the audience in that part of the country where they originated. And, generally, all those who had once been the subjects of it, continued to be frequently affected, and not only at meeting, but at home, and sometimes when entirely alone. After the commencement of the jerks, they spread rapidly in all directions. Persons drawn by curiosity to visit the congregations where they existed, were often seized, and when they returned home, they would communicate them to the people there. But, in some instances, they occurred in remote valleys of the mountains, where the people had no opportunity of communication with the infected. In East Tennessee and the south western part of Virginia, their prevalence was the greatest; and in this region, persons of all descriptions were seized, from the aged, gray-headed preacher, down to children of eight or ten years of age. Soon, however, the "exercise" began to assume a variety of appearances. While the jerks in the arms continued to be the most common form, in many cases, the joint of the neck was the seat of the convulsive motion, and was thrown back and forward to an extent, and with a celerity, which no one could imitate, and which to the spectator was most alarming. Another common exercise was dancing, which was performed by a gentle and not ungraceful motion, but with little variety in the steps. During the administration of the Lord's Supper, in the presence of the Synod of Virginia, we witnessed a young woman performing this exercise for the space of twenty minutes or half an hour. The pew in which she was sitting was cleared, and she danced from one end to the other; her eyes were shut, and her countenance calm. When the dancing terminated, she fell, and seemed to be agitated with more violent motions. We saw another who had, what was termed, "the jumping exercise;" which resembled that of the jumpers in Wales. It was truly wonderful to observe the violence of the impetus with which she was borne upwards from the ground: it required the united strength of three or four of her companions to confine her down. None of these varieties, however, were half so terrible to the spectator, as that which affected the joint of the neck. In this, it appeared as if the neck must be broken; and while the bosom heaved in an extraordinary manner, the countenance was distorted in a disgusting way.

Besides the "exercises" already mentioned, there were some

of the most curious and ludicrous kind. In one, the affected barked like a dog; in another, they boxed with fists clenched, striking at every body or thing near to them. The running exercise was also one of the varieties, in which the person was impelled to run with amazing swiftness. There were many other singular motions in imitation of persons playing on the violin, or sewing with a needle, &c. &c.

The most remarkable circumstance in relation to these various exercises was, that a person affected with a peculiar species of the jerks, coming into a congregation where that had not been experienced, would commonly communicate it to those who had been affected with exercises of a different kind. Thus, a lady from Tennessee, who brought into a certain part of Virginia the barking exercise, immediately was imitated by certain of those affected with the jerks, who had never seen any thing of this sort before. These nervous agitations were at first received as something supernatural, intended to arrest the attention of the careless multitude, and were therefore encouraged and sustained by many of the pious; but after a while they became troublesome. The noise made by these convulsive motions in the pews was such, that the preacher could not be composedly heard; and in several of the exercises the affected person needed the attention of more than one assistant. Besides, nervous agitation or falling was so easily brought on by the least mental excitement, even at home, that many who were the subjects of the jerks, became weary of it; and, in some cases, avoided serious and exciting thoughts, lest they should produce this effect. It is remarkable, however, that they all united in their testimony, that in the most violent and convulsive agitations, as when the head would rapidly strike the breast and back alternately, no pain was experienced; and some asserted, that when one arm only was affected with the jerks, it felt more comfortable than the other, through the whole day. Perhaps, this was imagination. In some places the persons affected were not permitted to come to the church, on account of the noise and disturbance produced. The subjects were generally pious, or seriously affected with religion, but not universally. There were cases in which careless persons, and those who continued to be such, were seized. The dread of the jerks was great in many, both religious and careless, and upon the whole, the effect produced by them was very unfavourable to the advancement of religion. All, however, were not of this opinion. Some who had much experience of them, continued to speak favourable of their effects.

We have the pleasure of annexing to our account, the statement of an intelligent and respectable physician, who appears to have paid much attention to subjects of this kind. The opinion of such men is valuable, as they are better acquainted with the physiology of man, than other persons.

THE JERKS.

This affection I have repeatedly witnessed in the State of Illinois in the years 1822-3-4. The persons subject to it were principally females in the humbler walks of life, natives of North Carolina and Tennessee. Young females (say from thirteen to thirty years old) of sanguine and nervous temperament were more addicted to it than others. It is equally prevalent among Methodists and Cumberland Presbyterians. Their discourses are generally passionate addresses, first to the fears and secondly to the sympathies of their hearers. At the conclusion of these addresses hymns are sung with great animation, the leaders passing through the congregation shaking their hands. The jerks or falling generally commences at the conclusion of the sermon and increase during the singing. Different persons are variously affected: some rise to their feet and spin round like a top, while others dance till they fall down exhausted. Some throw back their heads with convulsive laughter, while others drowned in tears break forth in sighs and lamentations. Some fall from their seats in a state of insensibility and lie for hours without consciousness, while others are affected with violent convulsions resembling epilepsy. Those habituated to the affection are generally attacked under the circumstances above detailed, but I have seen some persons who had become so irritable that the least mental excitement would produce the paroxysm. Others appeared to be affected from sympathy. I have seen several young women of the same neighbourhood, who were always attacked at seeing one of their number with the paroxysm. I have seen others who would be instantly attacked on seeing any person with the affection without having any previous mental excitement. During the *convulsive paroxysm*, recollection and sensation are but little impaired; after continuing a certain period, the person generally falls into a state of stupor very much resembling that subsequent to epilepsy. Yet the animal functions are not much impaired. The pulse is natural. The temperature that of health throughout the paroxysm: after it has subsided, there is soreness of the muscles and a slight dull pain of the head, which soon pass away.

From the sex of those most subject to the affection, the time

of life when they are most susceptible of it, the condition they occupy in society, the causes which excite it into action, and the effect produced by the paroxysm, I was led to the conclusion that it was a nervous disease brought on by continued mental excitement, and protracted by habit, that after it has once become habitual from long continued mental excitement, sympathy will be sufficient to call it into action without mental excitement.

Many of the subjects of this affection were addicted to hysterics; and *all*, persons easily affected by any thing exciting the natural sympathies.

I have omitted to mention one fact I have often witnessed, viz: that *restraint* often prevents the paroxysm. For example: persons always attacked by this affection in churches where it is encouraged, will be perfectly calm in other churches where it is *discouraged*, however affecting may be the service, and however great the mental excitement. Some of them have told me that such was the fact, and as these were the more intelligent of those addicted to such affections, I doubt not the truth of what they said.

REFLECTIONS.

1. The first reflection which is suggested by the preceding accounts is, that the physiology of the human system is very imperfectly understood.

2. The second is, that an irregular action of the nervous system produces often very astonishing appearances.

3. Religious excitement carried to excess is a dangerous thing. Enthusiasm is the counterfeit of true religion, and is a species of insanity.

4. In revivals of religion, badly regulated, there may be much extravagance, and yet the work in the main may be genuine. The wise will discriminate, and not approve or condemn in the lump.

5. Pious men and women are imperfect in knowledge and often form erroneous opinions which lead them astray. Bodily affections however, are no evidence of error or enthusiasm.

6. Such bodily affections as are described in the foregoing narratives, are no doubt real nervous diseases, which do not destroy the general health.

7. All such things tend to the discredit of religion, and should be prevented or discouraged.